

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 007961

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:SHUM, EAID, SL

SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE: USAID IN-
CREASED REVENUE FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

REF: A) FREETOWN 0048 B) STATE 304038

1. SUMMARY: THE SUBJECT GRANT PROJECT WAS APPROVED AT A MEETING HELD JANUARY 9 OF THE INTERAGENCY GROUP ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE. AMBASSADOR IS REQUESTED TO SEEK AN APPOINTMENT WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CONTEH TO EXPRESS USG CONCERN ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN SIERRA LEONE DESCRIBED IN THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORT FOR 1977. END SUMMARY.

2. THE STAFF GROUP OF THE INTERAGENCY GROUP ON HUMAN RIGHTS
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AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE MET ON JANUARY 9 TO DISCUSS, INTER ALIA, THE INCREASED REVENUE FOR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN LIGHT OF EMBASSY'S RECENT REPORT (REF A) ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN SIERRA LEONE. IT NOTED WITH APPROVAL THAT SOME POSITIVE ACTION HAS TAKEN PLACE SINCE THE AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL (AI) REPORT FOR 1977 WAS ISSUED, AND RECOGNIZED THAT THE PROJECT, BY INCREASING BUDGETARY FUNDS AVAILABLE, WILL

PERMIT THE GOSL TO EXPAND DIRECTLY ITS DEVELOPMENT
ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES TO THE RURAL POOR. CONSEQUENTLY,

THE GROUP AGREED TO THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE PROJECT
AND OBLIGATION OF THE FUNDS. IT REMAINS CONCERNED,
HOWEVER, ABOUT POLITICAL DETAINEES NOT YET RELEASED,
AND DESIRES FOLLOW-UP REPORTING ON DEVELOPMENTS.

3. THE GROUP ALSO BELIEVES THAT USG CONCERN OVER THE
ALLEGATIONS CONTAINED IN THE AI REPORT SHOULD BE EXPRESSED
TO THE GOSL. ACCORDINGLY, THE AMBASSADOR IS REQUESTED
TO CALL ON FOREIGN MINISTER CONTEH TO MAKE THE FOLLOWING
POINTS:

A) THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION IS INCREASINGLY INTERESTED
IN HUMAN RIGHTS CONDITIONS WORLDWIDE, AND HAS NOTED WITH
CONCERN THE RECENT REPORT ON SIERRA LEONE BY AI. WHILE
THE US RECOGNIZES THAT SIERRA LEONE HAS A LONG AND
CREDITABLE HISTORY OF MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY, FREE-
WHEELING POLITICAL COMPETITION, AND A FREE PRESS, WE
CANNOT IGNORE ALLEGATIONS SUCH AS THOSE LODGED BY AI
WHICH WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE A TREND AWAY FROM
SIERRA LEONE'S TRADITIONAL RESPECT FOR BASIC CIVIL
AND POLITICAL RIGHTS.

B) THESE AND OTHER ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF BASIC HUMAN
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RIGHTS HAVE ALSO COME TO THE ATTENTION OF VARIOUS PRIVATE
GROUPS IN THE UNITED STATES WHICH HAVE FORCEFULLY BROUGHT
THEM TO THE ATTENTION OF USG OFFICIALS.

C) PROVISIONS IN US FOREIGN ASSISTANCE LEGISLATION
PROHIBIT OUR ASSISTING COUNTRIES WHO HAVE BEEN CONSISTENT
AND GROSS VIOLATORS OF BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS, AND THESE
PROVISIONS HAVE BEEN APPLIED IN SOME CASES.

D) IF THERE ARE INACCURACIES OR MISREPRESENTATIONS OF
FACT IN THE AI REPORT, AN INVITATION TO THE ORGANIZATION
TO VISIT SIERRA LEONE TO LEARN FIRST HAND ABOUT THE
HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION WOULD HELP CLEAR THE AIR.

E) WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOUR RAISING THIS MATTER WITH PRESI-
DENT STEVENS AND OTHER GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, AND WE
WOULD WELCOME YOUR REPORT ON THEIR REACTION. CHRISTOPHER

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